

## The Last Supper for the laptop generation

### Level 3 • Advanced

#### 1 Warmer: The Last Supper quiz

Try to answer these questions in teams.

1. What kind of painting is the Last Supper?
2. Who painted the Last Supper?
3. When was it painted?
4. Where is the painting?
5. How big is the painting?
6. How many people are depicted in the painting?

#### 2 Key words

Skim-read the article to find words that mean the following.

1. *heavenly*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 1)
2. *officials / government workers and departments*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
3. *a large communal food hall*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
4. *give someone away, expose someone*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
5. *forefront, up-to-date, most modern*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3)
6. *curse, say offensive things about religious beliefs*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
7. *turning point, important*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)
8. *the time after the invention of computers*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
9. *people and institutions connected with education*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
10. *outer sex organs*: \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)

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#### Greenaway's hi-tech gadgetry highlights da Vinci for the laptop generation

Robert Booth in Milan  
July 2, 2008

- 1 With a glint of a dagger and a blaze of celestial light, Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* burst into new life on Monday night after Peter Greenaway finally got permission to reinvent the crumbling, 510-year-old masterpiece as a sound and light show.
- 2 In a remarkable victory for the British film director, the Italian authorities allowed Greenaway to take projectors, computers and speakers into the usually quiet and air-sealed refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie, where the image of Christ telling the apostles that one of them will betray him decorates an end wall. Inside the refectory, Greenaway unveiled his vision of one of Christianity's most sacred and fragile paintings, re-imagined "for the laptop generation".
- 3 To the sound of modern opera, he used cutting-edge technical tricks to make Leonardo's Christ appear like a three-dimensional hologram while a radiant sun rose and set over his head. He turned the original colourful image red, grey and black before the artist's gentle brush strokes were replaced with a chalk outline of the 13 figures, as if Leonardo had drawn a crime scene. Dawn broke, dusk fell and by the end the disciples had been dramatically cast into the shadow of prison-like bars.
- 4 At least one of the world's experts on da Vinci thought Greenaway's work was cultural vandalism. But others think it may have saved *The Last Supper's* reputation from *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown's blockbuster novel, which frustrated many experts by reducing the painting's hidden meanings to part of a plot.
- 5 Monday's one-off performance almost did not happen. For 18 months the authorities refused permission as they were worried about possible damage to the painting and that Greenaway might blaspheme. Pietro Marani, one of the world's leading Leonardo scholars who spent 17 years on the painting's latest restoration, said he would not attend. "I don't think it is appropriate to use the painting as a projection screen for a performance of contemporary art," he said. "We did not conserve this so that it would become an artist's material. Peter Greenaway uses Leonardo because it will grab the world's attention."
- 6 Permission was finally granted late last month by the national government in Rome. Greenaway was only allowed to stage the show for one night and to a select group of Milanese dignitaries, art experts and monks. But despite the small audience, there was a feeling that Greenaway's show could become a pivotal moment in the painting's history.
- 7 "If Leonardo was alive now he wouldn't just be interested in film-making, he would be handling high-definition cameras and would be experimenting with holograms," said Greenaway. "He would be fascinated by the post-digital age. I am sure that he would support what we are doing, which isn't true of some academics who believe that this painting belongs to them and not to the world. This painting belongs to the laptop generation as much as it does to academia and we want to demonstrate that."
- 8 He was forced to drop his plans to show the apostles' cups overflowing with blood and to project Christ's genitals on the refectory walls. But he said his goal was never to shock, but to help people look again at a work of art that has been devalued by being seen on chocolate boxes and on T-shirts.
- 9 After the performance, the audience responded with enthusiasm. "I saw things that I have never seen before," said Francesca Fiore, 41, a manager with Vodafone Italia. "It was incredible," said Pierre Demarani, a publisher. "There is a new light, a new colour and a new vision."
- 10 Greenaway plans to repeat the performance on *Las Meninas* by Velázquez, Picasso's *Guernica*, Monet's *Waterlilies* and a Jackson Pollock in New York. His ultimate ambition, though, is to work with Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

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### 3 Comprehension check

**Find the answers to the questions in the article.**

1. Peter Greenaway is...
  - a) ... an art critic.
  - b) ... a film director.
  - c) ... a novelist.
  - d) ... a painter.
2. The Last Supper can be seen in...
  - a) ... a palace in Venice.
  - b) ... the Vatican.
  - c) ... a church in Rome.
  - d) ... a dining hall in Milan.
3. Greenaway's Last Supper performance...
  - a) ... ruined the painting.
  - b) ... will run until the end of the year.
  - c) ... was shown only once.
  - d) ... will be shown again in the Sistine Chapel.
4. Greenaway thinks the painting should belong to...
  - a) ... the laptop generation.
  - b) ... academics.
  - c) ... everyone.
  - d) ... only a select few.
5. The invited audience thought the performance was...
  - a) ... blasphemous.
  - b) ... inappropriate.
  - c) ... incredible.
  - d) ... a waste of money.

## 4 Vocabulary

**How many words can you find in the article that can be used to talk about or describe light?**

**Make example sentences of your own for each of these words.**

Words from the article	Example sentences

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### 5 Webquest

Watch a two-minute video of the installation by following this link:

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/art/news/story/0,,2288367,00.html>

Alternatively, go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and type in *Peter Greenaway last supper installation*.

### 6 Discussion: But is it art?

How do you feel about Peter Greenaway's installation?

Can you think of any other examples of contemporary and/or controversial art?

What is 'art' for you?

Do you have a favourite piece of art?

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#### KEY

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**Teacher's tip:** award each team two points for a correct answer or if there are no correct answers, give one point to the team with the closest answer.

1. a fresco (although many call it a 'false fresco' as it was painted on a dry wall)
2. Leonardo da Vinci
3. between 1494 and 1498
4. In a refectory adjoining the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy.
5. 460 x 880 cm
6. 13: Jesus and his 12 apostles

#### 2 Key words

1. celestial
2. authorities
3. refectory
4. betray
5. cutting-edge
6. blaspheme
7. pivotal
8. post-digital
9. academia
10. genitals

#### 3 Comprehension check

1. b
2. d
3. c
4. c
5. c

#### 4 Vocabulary

(suggestions)  
glint, blaze, celestial (light), radiant, colourful, shadow

#### Teacher's notes:

If possible, watch the video yourself via the Guardian website or YouTube before teaching this lesson. Integrate the video into your lesson if it's technically possible.

Copy and print out (or show on screen) the seven photos which are found here: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/gallery/2008/jul/02/art?picture=335404629>

Either as an additional starter or as an extension, ask the students to talk about what they see on each photo.

Set an extra task for homework: ask the students to find out how they would go about seeing the Last Supper. Where and how would they buy the tickets? How much do they cost? When can you go and see the Last Supper (every day or only at special times)? How would they get there? etc.